At Sea.

Wednesday.
9 Oct 40.

My darling Barbara -

Well, here begins a letter which will probably go on for quite a long time. It is a bit of an odd feeling to be writing a letter, knowing that it will not be finished today or this week - it will not be posted for several weeks - then it will be quite some time on its journey to you.

I suppose a new sort of technique is required - as you will have heard nothing from me for weeks & weeks, I should start off with love & kisses, or else you should begin at the end. But perhaps the best way will be to write you a separate letter the day this is posted, & then you can turn to this epistle afterwards.

The rules of censorship are, of course

pretty strict, & I must be careful what I say.

I was very glad to be able to talk to you again on Sunday afternoon - there wasn't really much to say, was there - but it was nice just to say goodbye again.

We eventually sailed during Monday, we were all very pleased to be off - it was too exasperating to be tied up in port & only an hour & a half in a car away from you. Once we had sailed - well, that was that, & felt relieved but sad.

This is a very fine ship - & we have been lucky in this direction - especially so as the weather has been terrific. Most people have been ill or nearly ill - & the tables & chairs have been whizzing from one side of the state room to the other. Even the stewards & people said it was pretty bad. I don't know how

You would have managed, darling. I'm afraid you would have been pretty miserable. My inside has behaved magnificently - & apart from getting rather browned off with the perpetual pitching & rolling, I have been alright. & have been eating & sleeping quite normally. In fact, the sea air & sea air have actually stimulated my appetite, if that were possible.

The food is extremely good. In my cabin, I have James - MacCackie - Tiefer - Waters & Whelan - & I have taken the upper bunk, next to the porthole; when we reach hot climates, this will be an advantage. We start the day with a cup of tea at 7-30. Then a wash & shave in strictly rationed cold fresh water - followed by a hot sea water bath & cold sea water shower. Then some steady walking round the decks, & breakfast at 9 o'clock. This consists of porridge & cream - fish - bacon & eggs

things - toast marmalade - coffee.
After which I feel very well, & go &
have a lovely movement - feel even better.
We then have general boat-drill - after
that ½ an hours P.T. with our men, which
is a very good thing. It is then about midday,
& the hour before lunch is filled in with
reading or writing or talking or looking
at the sea - having a drink. Lunch
& dinner are excellent - soup & fish & choice
of meats & sweets & so on, & all very
good. Messing on board is free - so that
part of it is all most satisfactory.
I have been very temperate up to now,
you will be pleased to hear. And drinks
are beautifully cheap: beer 4d - whisky 6d.
pink gin 2½d - gin & lime 4½d - & 20 Players
8d. Hard times, isn't it?
I am playing a lot of bridge it seems
as though I shall play most nights.
The usual four is Ian myself & a
couple of quite pleasant Norwich Majors.
I find myself to be quite good - in

spite of not having played - am about 12/- up, to date. So at the moment I have more money than when I came on the boat.

We go to bed fairly early read a bit before going to sleep. I have finished a High Wind in Jamaica - found it quite interesting. It is all about some small children.

My bunk is very comfortable - I sleep very well.

Tuesday. 15 Oct.

Hello, sweetheart. Nearly a week has passed since I started this letter. I had intended to write an instalment each day, but somehow this does not seem to be very easy, I find it better to write larger instalments every few days. So when you reach this part of the letter, perhaps you will imagine the passing of time. I have been missing you very much,

darling, whereas, it is very easy to pass the time on this ship, I can't help feeling very miserable indeed, several times a day. So much so that I cared not even being myself to look at photographs until Sunday, then they affected me so much that I just cried cried until I went to sleep on my bed. The Poly photo of Lisa is so sweet - it was taken so long ago, we knew so much of her after it was taken, that it seems so wrong impossible that we will do not know, will not know any more.

I'm afraid, darling one, that at the times when you have broken down & cried about Lisa, I must have seemed unsympathetic & even harsh. I do hope you have understood that it was not meant this way - but I just seem to have to harden my heart & tell myself

that I must not do the same then you will feel better sooner. I have not really wanted to do this + feel like this, but I do not seem to be able to help myself. I think it is that you look helpless as I did on Sunday - that has just forced me to feel that I must stand up to it. You must forgive me if you haven't understood - but I think you will have, darling.

I have talked to Rex quite a lot about Lisa, his wife + you - things generally. She is a very nice kind person to have to talk to. Marjorie had told him all about her talk with you. He thinks you are a very very wonderful person (you know the way he would say this) - very brave, very pretty, + I am very fortunate.

Since finishing the first instalment of this letter the weather has changed completely. The big storm eventually blew

itself out - or more probably it went on blowing & we left it behind. We gradually came into better & warmer weather, & it is now simply gorgeous & very hot indeed. I wear shorts & shirt from morning till night - & go to bed with nothing on mind under a sheet. Even then it is impossibly hot in the cabin at night, with six of us in it, & about $\frac{2}{3}$ the size of the dining room at Warren Fields. We take the bulbs out of the lights so as nobody can switch them on, & then open the port hole: the main things forbidden are dirty socks left lying about the place - & farting! Tonight I hope to sweet my camp bed and sleep on deck. Last night was truly wonderful on deck, & I believe one could read a book. You can hardly believe how gorgeous the weather is - it is

about twice as gorgeous as the most gorgeous Mediterranean day we saw last year - the sky is twice as clear - the sea twice as blue - the sun twice as hot.
I am writing in the lounge place - because I just get too sticky on deck & cannot write at all.

I was going to say when I started this instalment, that there is now a special reason for pushing on with this letter, as we are going to make a call on Friday letters will be able to be posted. this is really rather exciting as it is so much sooner than I expected for posting a letter to you. I don't know whether we shall be allowed ashore or not - but - I am hoping to be able to send you a cable. I shan't be able to say very much, of course, just love to you & Bill, & I am very well - but you

will at least hear from me. I believe we may be calling again, later on, this line for a few days. It will be marvellous if this is so, as I shall be able to cable you & get a reply. It will be wonderful just to get love from you in a cable. Amazing, isn't it? If we do call - I shall hope to see Ann, of course - it will be grand if this is possible.

We are quite a happy party on this ship. There is a very big crowd of officers, but we do not really have much to do with any body else, except the bridge playing majors & three or four others. At meals we have the same six as in the cabin. Meals are most entertaining, as there are no newspapers & therefore conversation flourishes. There was a slight-

attempt to bring down books, but I nipped this in the bud. We have the most furious arguments - political, military, social & general - tempers get very rough, & people get very rude - especially myself - but it is all very good, because no malice is borne, & everything comes all right again.

We have just the correct mixture for this, of course - Trevor is rather Red & a bit pig headed too apt to generalise. Eric is foolishly dyed in the wool true blue & rather pompous & brainless, as you know. Terence Walters is pretty pukka British, but quite clever & sound in his own way. Mac emerges from his silence quite a lot & is quite good. Stoker more or less spectates, except on Army matters. I don't quite know what I am, but I seem to get more furious excitement than any body else, of kind

it great fun to get the others worked up & at cross purposes.

And still discussing these people - it is amazing what bad personal habits people have. Ian used to, & still do, laugh at me & pull my leg - but really! As far as I can see, only Gibson myself make a practice of cleaning teeth when going to bed. Gibson & Trevor both go to bed in their underclothes. Eric wears a peculiar body belt, in which he also keeps his money - this never seems to come off at all. They all smoke in bed - before going to sleep & when waking up. The other morning when in my bath, Trevor came in to have a twinkle in the W. I had to scream at him before he would go away - "don't make such an fuss, man" he said. And there was another place two doors away. I'm beginning to

think that you have a nice, clean, hygienic kind of husband - with good habits. Do you agree?

Rex is really the most satisfactory of them all & I am very fond of him. Of course, he does not sleep or eat with us - but he drinks with us always joins us after dinner, when he sits reads & watches the bridge & sometimes plays. He is so incurably good humoured & so very funny & can be guaranteed to make me laugh any time. His face & figure make me start screaming. I should like to think I was going to get into the same Battalion or station with him.

Bridge goes on nightly - I am now 18/3 up on the trip. You will have to try & learn again, when I come home. On the other hand, though

I enjoy it very much - I don't suppose I should miss it very much if I did not play again. Certainly I would rather go to the flicks with you, or stay at home & read with you, than go & play bridge without you.

I am now a complete grease spot, & think I will have a cup of tea & resume this tomorrow.

Love & kisses, sweetheart.

Thursday - Dec 14th.

It has suddenly been announced that letters must be handed in by 12 o'clock today, which is annoying because I had intended to finish this this afternoon, & now I must hurry & do it in this morning - in between things.

The last two days have been mostly spent

reading the men's letters, which have to be censored by us. It is a pathetic job. I hate doing it. Officers, it seems, are trusted not to write anything they shouldn't - but this will be liable to censorship by the civil authorities

The tropical kit I bought is very satisfactory & comfortable - but I am extremely glad I did not buy any jackets or slacks. Only a few people have not got them - but there are some dreadful sloppy looking sights - others which are jolly smart & well cut - in spite of what Simpsons said.

It is terribly sad, darling one, the way this ship goes on & on & on, always taking me further away from you, & I can hardly bear to think about it at all. It just seems such an age until I am going to see you again. I feel more than ever truly & deeply in love

with you, so happily conscious of our love for eachother. It is a very satisfactory & calming feeling, darling. And of course, I hope & trust that you are well - that you can now feel certain that the baby is a fact. Do see Mr Hughes soon, won't you - & be very careful.

Quite a number of men on this boat have every intention of having their wives - & even children - come out here. They are waiting until they arrive & find out where they are going to be, & whether it is suitable or not.

Apparently there was an Army Council Instruction, saying that under certain circumstances, wives of serving officers would be granted permits. They say there are convoys of cargo boats, which carry a limited number of passengers - the fare is £80.

But this all depends on where I am

& if the conditions are alright to enable you to get a permit - & how you feel about it. Etc. of course. I will be telling you know everything - more as soon as I can.

The weather is now sickly hot & rather unpleasant It is cloudy, misty & humid & the sun doesn't really shine. On Tuesday night I slept on deck & it was lovely & cool. Last night it rained & I had to return to the cabin. The hot sea water is now turned off, owing to the central heating effect of the pipes. But I find a cold sea water bath very cooling & refreshing, even if a bit sticky making. I never expected to find myself in a cold bath in mid October & enjoying it. I am still very well & seem to be able to stand the heat quite well. I still able to use my brain & remain good tempered. I have been a bit troubled with wind the last few days - but I think this is caused partly by

food, but probably mostly by a couple of parties which suddenly happened. It is a wonderful thing to be able to order six double fries + 50 Players - + only have to pay 4/2. But during the day I mostly drink lemon squashes + lime squashes + tonics + so on.

We are now in the middle of a fierce bridge match. Mac + I are playing the two majors the best of 11 rubbers, for 5/- - + 3d a 100. They thought they were a shade good + so we challenged them. So far we 5- to 2 up on rubbers + 11/6 in cash - + they are getting more + more furious - + round like bull + throw the cards about + so on. They think they are getting the worst of the cards, but we do not let them get away with that, because it is not true. I told them last night that either they had not got card tricks or else they were not clever enough to be majors - which did not help much - + then Rex tells

there makes little jokes remarks calculated to upset. I enjoy it.

I have just come off boat drill parade, which took twice as long as usual, now, after 12 days on board – I am in a hell of hurry to catch the post: which seems ridiculous.

So I say goodbye, dearest, & hope this will reach you fairly quickly – that you will not mind if I so dismissed a letter.

I have not time to write my mother now – so will you let her know I am alright – that I will post her a letter from our next stop.

Look after yourself darling one – & write me everything about yourself when you write. The more you tell me the more I shall like it.

And darling sweet heart – I love you

with all my heart soul & body & breath
in my body.

Kisses kisses kisses all my love
to you dearest darling sweetheart Barbara -

Always your Mary

Asst. Serial R.M.H.C.A.
G.H.Q 2nd Echelon
c/o. A.P.O 725

J. H. Massey.

July 24th At Sea

Mrs. 3, 18, 19, 22, 40

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H.M.SHIPS

T/rs. H. T/assey.

2. Warren Fields

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